1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

The past and the future pale into insignificance when compared with the moment. To understand this isolated, self-sufficient Pygmy world of the moment is also to understand something about the Mbuti relationship with the villager living in a very different, expansive, and uncertain world of change. 182

It seems worth mentioning the environmental factor also because the Pygmy himself takes it into consideration. His myth and mime, both important mediums of expression of the Mbuti, accentuate the opposition between the forest and the outside world, and between their peoples. They show a constant effort on the part of the Mbuti to effect a satisfactory relationship with the forest world that dominates their lives with such certainty and inevitability. It is not necessary to consider the environment further, but we must go this far in order to begin to understand the people whose society we are studying. 182 778 (538) 182

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1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[P. 177-C]

the frequent moving of camp. According to Schebesta (1952, 80), the hut and the space in front are kept clean.

In leisure hours there are games and pastimes in which children and adults may take part, the dance being the most important. Schebesta (1952, 189 ff.) also mentions rope skipping; tug-of-war (often between men and women); *palienghe*, an organized battle between men and women for a regime of plantains; and a form of gambling known as *mali*. The women and children have various string games as well.

The dance takes place on every possible occasion and is accompanied by drums made by the villagers. The emphasis in archer music (Schebesta, 1952, 190) is, as in the dance, on rhythm. Schebesta cites a number of musical instruments that are used by the archers for recreation, notably the drum, the musical bow, the sanza, the zither, and the *ruma* pipes.

Legend telling and mime are other important means of recreation mentioned by Schebesta (1952, 195). These, like most other recreational activities of adults, take place in the evening around the campfire. It is here, in any case, that the bachelors usually sleep (although Schebesta mentions the fact that there are bands in which bachelor huts are built), as do such of the married men as are under sexual taboo.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[p. 187- C]

nor do the archers seem to rely on the villagers for any medical help. 75 628

Rationalization

Speculation on problems of life and death are dealt with under Religious Life (p. 188). Here we can say only that Schebesta does not give a special account of legends or legend telling. However, from the legends that he quotes, and from those given by Joset (1948), it appears that among the archers this is an important means not only of reinforcing a system of values, or of commenting on individual behavior in the band, but also of rationalizing the strange and unknown. 538 • 82

Joset divides his collection of legends into four categories: (1) the Pygmy and his life; (2) animals; happy and unhappy relations between animals and Pygmies; (3) legends concerning the stars and sky; and (4) legends revealing individual psychological traits. Schebesta (1936b) says that legends tend to be spontaneous creations of individuals; there is no formal body of standard folklore.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti .

[NET HUNTERS]

Games and pastimes are the same as those for the archers, with the addition of a form of spear practice. A large forest fruit is fixed to the end of a vine which is swung around in a circle. Men standing in a group surrounding the swinger throw their spears as the fruit comes past them, dashing in to retrieve the weapons that miss. 526 [84]

Legend telling, like dance and song, is an important medium of expression as well as recreation. Instrumental music among this group of Mbuti is virtually nil. In a hunting camp a *lukembi* (*sanza*) may be heard, a musical bow, and possibly, though rarely, a notched flute. If the camp is near a village the men may borrow or steal a drum for the dance; otherwise, they use sticks as clappers, either shaved at the end to give a flat sound, or left smooth to give a sharp, hollow sound. The women add to the rhythm with handclaps, and both sexes with stampings of the feet. 538 • 534 533

There are two kinds of secular dance, erotic and imitative, as described by Schebesta. The third kind of dance described for the archers, 535 [83] [372] [84]

[P 212-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 8 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 233-A]

536 artistic flair, even enter into the thought pro-
177 cesses of their subjects. They answer questions
157 in precisely the way they want to answer them,
81 without necessarily any regard for the truth.
They will give a villager the answers that they think he wants, and similarly with the European. Even among themselves Pygmies may appear to be conducting a serious discussion in their own terms, but one or another will, in fact, be talking, consciously or unconsciously, as a villager or a European might talk. Single or even several instances of what individual Mbuti say therefore must be taken only with extreme caution merely as general indications of what they really mean, particularly when they are replying to questions. While we may be able to talk with some certainty about "rationalization among the Mbuti," we do not have nearly enough evidence to talk about "Mbuti rationalization."[1]

• 538 Putnam, despite his long sojourn among the
114 Mbuti of the Ituri, was always extremely cautious concerning questions of origin and was very alert to the difficulty presented by the Mbuti mastery of imitation. The problem, as he saw it, was concerned not in the least

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

538
114

with origin, but rather with dissociating the insignificant from the significant, regardless of origin. A collection of legends as told by four men of the Epulu net hunters, then, is something of great value but to be used with care. Mrs. Putnam made such a collection, totaling some 200 legends. Its very size, coming from a single hunting band, adds to its value. To a person knowing the band and the men who told the legends, the significant can often be easily distinguished from the insignificant. But source material of this kind needs much fuller documentation than is available for use to be made of it for purposes of sociological analysis (see Turnbull, 1959).

538
[526]

[1] Similar caution is needed with legends, which, as with the archers, are an important means of expression for the net hunters. The legends are also effective means of social control and illustrate attempts to rationalize the unknown. If we talk about "Mbuti legends," we not only open ourselves to questions as to whether particular legends are of villager or Pygmy origin, but we also imply that the legends necessarily have traditional significance for the Mbuti. The Mbuti like a good story; they will retell it whatever its source. A legend may have had some particular significance for the people to whom it originally belonged, but for the Mbuti its only importance may lie in the scope it offers their histrionic talent.

[P 233-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 233-C]

The general observations that can be made from this collection of legends are: 538 •

1. The Mbuti of the Epulu are remarkably little concerned with matters relating to origin and tradition.

2. Their legends can be classified under three main sections: legends concerning their social life, legends relating to the animal and human kingdoms, and legends concerning the supernatural. In fact, the second section falls in part into social relations and in part into supernatural relations, but we mention it here to show the correspondence with Joset's (1948) classification for the archers.

While there are no professional storytellers among the Epulu net hunters, there are individuals who have a greater mastery of the art than others. They seem to hold an important position in the community, especially in relation to the activities of the *molimo* society. The storyteller and the clown seem to occupy a privileged position and to have a definite role to play in the men's society. Whether this also applies to the women of the *elima* is not known (p. 216). 538 564 [515] [522]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

In so far as the net hunters are much more likely to tell a legend than they are to discuss a question or expound a theory, legends are a valuable source that should be tapped, with the necessary cautions, to give us some insight into Mbuti rationalization as opposed to rationalization among the Mbuti. 538

Art

As among the archers, graphic art is limited to the decoration of the human body (notably the buttocks, legs, and face) and also of bark-cloth. As mentioned above, the juice of the gardenia fruit is used for painting body designs, which Putnam says are for pure esthetic effect and of no magical significance. He believes, however, that some of the facial scarifications may indicate clan membership. No details are given. He adds that sometimes women name their designs; for example, a spotted design may be called "leopard." The design rests in the hands of the artist rather than of the subject. 302 531 [386] [824] [304]

Sometimes even head shaving is performed in such a way as to leave simple designs.

Some carving is now being done (Fig. 49) in imitation of village carvings. 532 197

As with the archers, music and dance are vitally important means of expression to the 533 535

[P. 233-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 241 - A]

work, the victim dies. If the victim himself awakes and recognizes the *lozi* who is killing him, or if he is bewitched by unwittingly sharing his food with a *lozi*, he can save himself by calling on that person to come to him. If the *lozi* comes he will be saved, otherwise he will die. But there are no instances that such ever happened.

This belief seems associated with death and with people who are near to that particular crisis. There is a recorded instance of two men, a Pygmy and a villager, who were both accused of being *lozi*. Some time later the villager died in the arms of the Pygmy; since then the village family have held that particular Pygmy in great respect. Among the Mbuti of this area, however, the existence of *ulozi* seems to be of little, if any, practical significance, except as subject matter for storytellers.

The Godhead

The Putnam material does not support any theory of a celestial God such as that described by Schebesta for both the archers and the net hunters. Putnam denies that there is any evi-

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

538 [716] *Satani* are very popular with the Mbuti as subject matter for their legends, and they let their imaginations run riot. A *satani* can do almost anything except kill a really clever Pygmy. They are used frequently as excuses for failure in the hunt or in honey gathering. When a Pygmy has found a good honey tree and has managed to consume most of the honey himself, his excuse to the camp for not bringing back more will be that he was waylaid by a *satani* who was so tricky that he turned into the Pygmy's grandmother, so he had to hand over all his honey, or something to that effect. (This excuse I heard myself.) Rather than examine more *satani* legends, we now briefly review the collection as here presented and draw such conclusions as we can.

538 128 Any conclusions are necessarily general and tentative and are of course based not only on a knowledge of the entire collection of legends, only a bare tenth of which is reproduced here, but of the Mbuti themselves. Also it must be emphasized that we are dealing with only one particular band of Pygmies, a net-hunting group in the Epulu District of the Ituri Forest.

My classification of the legends into three groups, which is quite arbitrary and satisfactory

[P 269- B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 269-C]

only for certain purposes, reveals at once a lack of interest in the past which is in accord with the apparent shortness of memory among these Pygmies, particularly noticeable when an investigator tries to construct some sort of genealogy. For me it heightens my suspicion of such genealogies given by a people who at times are only too willing to please by inventing totally fictitious names. The legends prove singularly unrewarding to anyone seeking some evidence of a lineage system. If they represent anything, they represent a people who are wholly absorbed in the present. If we accept this evidence, we can look for its consequences in the magico-religious life of the Mbuti as well as in other spheres.

538 128

[181]

Also with reference to the Mbuti magico-religious system, there is possibly some significance in the tendency to emphasize the natural order of events in the legends relating to social life. The ideal represented in the legend is the normal; consequently, these particular legends seem singularly unimaginative. They read like reports of actual occurrences. A certain amount of cleverness is normal, but an excess of it (when the term becomes best translated as "trickery") is abnormal and leads us, as we have seen, into

538 183

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the world of the supernatural. The Pygmy is anxious to preserve the normal, the *status quo*. Although one could hardly determine this with any certainty from the legends alone, they certainly confirm the notion, which is of particular significanec with reference to Mbuti religious thought. We return briefly to this point below. 538 183

The second section dealing with social relations also reveals a center of interest on food, the importance of the food quest being implied repeatedly. Also emphasized is the importance of cooperation, not only between members of the same family, but between all members of the hunting band. These legends tell us that vice and virtue are scarcely understood as such, that the dominating quality is cleverness, with its converse, stupidity. But, as pointed out, this is a borderline world. Whereas cleverness may be of use to a Pygmy in his normal everyday life, it is really a quality associated with his dealings with the animal and supernatural worlds. In fact, one legend, not mentioned, quite distinctly tells us that in everyday life it is not good to be too clever, but better to be normal. An elephant hunter who loses his normality (by failing to accept food offered to him, and failing to join in the conversation) is 538 181 [476] [577] 538 181 183

[P 269-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.270-A]

538 promptly deserted as being unsafe company. So
181 we might gather that in daily life normality is
183 the ideal, and, when the supernatural (including animals, regarded as possessed of supernatural powers), is dealt with, cleverness is dominant.

538 From the second section of legends we can
888 finally glean some information from the treatment of old age. Two things emerge: first, old age is associated with extra cleverness, approaching trickery; second, we find Pygmy realism emerging again when old age is accompanied by disability. Either way, old age is a dangerous condition. In this particular band it is perhaps significant that the leaders of the group are not old, but are the active—the "great hunters."

538 Animals, like food, enter into the majority of
825 legends, and in some cases they seem to be regarded merely as animals. But more often the trickery of the animal is emphasized and, consequently, its association with the supernatural. In the third kind of legends, those dealing with the supernatural, we find animals in almost every one.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

almost every one. We also find villagers. Throughout, the legends are interesting in their revelation of the Pygmy attitude to his villager neighbors, but nowhere more so than when the villagers appear as elephants, profane elephants desecrating the sacred forest. At times the Pygmy regards the villager as stupid (in matters concerning everyday forest life), but at others the villager is associated with the excess of cleverness that we call "trickery," and then he belongs in either the animal or the supernatural worlds—certainly not in the Pygmy (human) world. This notion is one that we might usefully transpose from the legendary world to the world of reality. Just what is the Pygmy's relationship with the villager?

Here I wish to draw attention, at the risk of appearing repetitious, to the constant opposition we find in the legends between the natural (Pygmy) world and the supernatural, the normal (reasonable) world and the world of trickery. In his everyday life the Pygmy is also faced with an opposition between two real (in our sense) worlds—his forest world and the world of the villager. No two worlds could be more dissimilar. The villager is afraid of the forest; he believes it to be full of darkness and evil. One of the most striking points brought out by a study of these legends is the absence of any concept of evil (in the sense of conscious

[P. 270-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.270-C)

malevolence) in the forest world of the Pygmy. In his daily life the Pygmy regards the forest as a kind, good, protective home. At the risk of being accused of begging the question, I would like to say that other evidence (song, dance, and the practices of the Mbuti religious associations) also suggests that the Pygmy opposes these two worlds as we would oppose the sacred to the profane. Our understanding of his relationship with the villager tribes that surround him is, I think, considerably increased if we bear this fact in mind and realize its full implications. 538 • 181 771 772

I deliberately use the term "supernatural" loosely in order to allow the fact to appear that very few of these legends deal with the supernatural as we generally understand the term. Situations that would, to us, be supernatural—such as villagers turning into elephants or even *satani* changing form at will and luring innocent Pygmies to their doom—to the Pygmy are, in a sense, natural. Like the difference between the sphere of magic and that of religion, and in a way corresponding to them, the dividing line is 538 771

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

difficult to define. Perhaps the nearest approach is to say that, while trickery is not a human quality, it is one that the human (i.e., the Pygmy) can cultivate and use to deal with those to whom it properly belongs—animals, *satani*, and in certain circumstances the villagers.

Another significant feature in this collection of legends is the total absence of reference to witchcraft and sorcery. This is also reflected in daily life, where magical practices are almost non-existent. We are here considering the legends, so shall not digress with a discussion of Mbuti magic, but it seems appropriate to mention the coincidence of two deficiencies—a lack of any real body of traditional folklore, on the one hand, and a lack of traditional magical belief and practice, on the other.[1] Legends are invented *ad hoc* or altered and adapted to suit varying circumstances. Even when answering questions, the Mbuti often invents a myth and tells it as though it were fact. The recounting of an incident during a hunt or while honey gathering often appears in the form of a legend. There

[1] The possible correlation of these two was suggested during a discussion with Dr. Michael Smith at the University of the West Indies. Though he cannot be held responsible for the exact interpretation given here, I am grateful to him for the stimulus.

538 271 [828]
538 784 182 [1154]
[P 270-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.271-A]

538 182 789 is no standard body of folklore; it is rather a matter for individual, spontaneous invention or adaptation. Now it is reasonable to suppose that a standard folklore is associated with magical belief, for magical belief is no more than a socially accepted way of explaining the otherwise inexplicable. If the reason cannot be clearly seen, it is invented and at least clearly understood. With the Mbuti such is not the case. [76] [154] [154] There is no common explanation of death or illness in terms of witchcraft or sorcery. A man invents his own legends; he invents his own explanations for abnormal occurrences. The 538 776 nearest approach to standard mythological rationalization is perhaps the popularly accepted myth concerning *satani*. Yet *satani* are not malevolent (they do not wish disease and death on people). Though it is their nature to be dangerous, they are dangerous only when seen. They are essentially tangible. They work in a perfectly understandable way and can be counteracted in an equally intelligible manner.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

538 776 Whatever their nature, the essential thing is that, in counteracting *satani* danger the Pygmy in his behavior is absolutely pragmatic. He uses his spear or his bow and arrow and his cleverness. At most the Pygmy will use the common belief in *satani* as an explanation of some minor mishap, the real explanation of which he probably knows but is not willing to admit (carelessness during the hunt, failure while looking for honey, and so on). The belief in *satani* is never used to explain anything more. Yet it is the only common belief of this kind. We are undoubtedly faced, as the legends themselves indicate, with a people with no standard body of magical belief and practice. [789]

It will need further field work and analysis to determine the connection here between myth and magic.

533 771 772 I mention one further factor, which in a way may be said to be magical, and that is the power of song. Yet it is so unlike magic in the accepted sense of that term (with connotations of witchcraft and sorcery) that I do not feel it affects the foregoing hypothesis. Here we enter another world, mentioned again and again in the legends. Unlike the world of animals and *satani*, with which the Pygmy can cope by cultivating cleverness, this world is one in which at first it seems that he has no such weapon. This is perhaps more truly the "supernatural." This is the world of water animals and

[P. 271-B]

1: Turnbull E . 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 271C]

rainbows, of streams where strange things happen, of birds and beautiful songs. (It is also, oddly enough, a world of vine swings.) 533 771 772

However one might quibble about the meaning of the term "evil" and its applicability to animals and villagers, it most assuredly seems to have no place at all in this last world, any more than cleverness or trickery. We return again to the value of normality. We have a fusion of the normal and the supernatural that is difficult to grasp, but in which, I believe, lies the key to the magico-religious system of these Mbuti. It is difficult to determine the exact [825] significance of the part birds play in the legends in the last section, but there is no doubt that the Mbuti associate them in some way with what I am now forced to call the "supernormal" world, that unknown world that lies beyond death. To conclude, I would like to refer to the 533 legend of the Bird with the Beautiful Song, 538 which I mention above. 789

The curious thing about this legend, and the many variant forms in which the theme is repeated, is the emphasis on the song. Sometimes the narrator sings; these are rare moments that are not easily forgotten and far less easily ex-

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

plained. But there is a feeling, and I cannot say 533
that it is more than that, that song has power. 538 •
The song may have no words; it may be a mix- 789
ture of meaningless sounds; but plainly it is esthetically satisfying to the Mbuti. These wordless songs are among the most powerful. When the father killed the bird, he killed the song, and he dropped down dead, completely dead, dead forever. In real life, also, song is powerful. Membership in the religious associations of the women and the men gives the Pygmy the right to take part in the singing of songs peculiar to those associations. In fact, it imposes a duty to do so. The songs are distinguished not by their content but by their musical style and the technique of performance. It is the *sound*, rather than the word content, that matters. These songs are sung, in their most powerful form, only on occasions of the greatest distress, such as sickness or death of one of the great hunters, or failure in the chase. These are departures from normality. It has been my contention from an analysis of the function of music among the Mbuti that song is believed to restore that normality.

As well as several more obvious differences 538
from villager values, such as emphasis by the 171
[p. 271-D] 181

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[p.272-A]

538 171 181 Mbuti on the food quest, their lack of interest in the past, with a corresponding lack of interest in lineage or tribal ancestry, and an opposition typical of forest people between the animal and the human worlds, more significant differences appear in the legends. One such difference is, of course, the way the Mbuti tend to class the villagers with the animals, in association with the spiritual world, the world of trickery, in opposition to the human world. Then there is the contrast between the Pygmy attitude to the forest as the provider of all that is good as well as bad, and the attitude of the villagers who regard the forest as a place to be feared, the abode of evil. This contrast is heightened by the different magical and religious approaches of the two people. The legends tend to confirm the validity of my suggestion that the prime function of the Mbuti magico-religious system is to maintain normality in the relationship between the people and the forest. The villagers seem more concerned with disorders and abnormalities and appear to have no such use of song as that I have described for the Mbuti, making greater use of witchcraft and sorcery.

538 121 To understand the meaning fully in each type of legend, we need to know who told it, to whom, with what accompanying mime, to what effect, and under what circumstances. Given such surrounding details, we could use legends and allied arts to analyze that extremely diffi-

Is Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P 272-B]

cult subject of sociological study, the magico-religious system. In the absence of such details we can do only as we have done above and indicate some of the general tendencies in the legends, where emphasis is given and where it is lacking, without being able to attempt any formal systematization. Even so, from this collection of legends there seems to be ample justification for supposing that the rejection of villager values which we saw in the *nkumbi* is real and not a mere psychological reaction. It is in fact an integral theme running through the legends. If the opposition is such as we suppose, it accounts for the lack of responsibility manifest by the Mbuti toward their villager hosts at all points where the two people come into contact.

538 • 121

538 186 121

The legends further emphasize the sanctity of the forest. This emphasis is one of the main ways in which the Pygmy maintains his distinctness from the villager. But the importance of the forest is not confined to the Mbuti-villager relationship. It is the central theme of the Mbuti magico-religious system, a glimmering of which we get in the legends relating to the supernatural, a system that is evidently quite distinct from that of the villagers, despite the common usage of certain names and practices. At this point perhaps, the two people are farthest apart.

538 778 771 171

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PO1

were, harm upon another. Masisi put it as well as it could be put when discussing Aberi's death (pp. 61–62), allegedly due to an Ngwana's use of sorcery. The circumstances were such—the three healthy "accused" all dying within such a short space of time following the curse—that there was a general discussion of village sorcery. There was disagreement of opinion as to whether or not it involved supernatural power, as claimed by the villagers. Most Mbuti stated bluntly that this was impossible, for such power was necessarily good. They held that the deaths had all been caused by poison. Others were not so sure. But the crux of the discussion was that whether caused by supernatural power or by poison, the action was not that of a man. Masisi said, "If you have a quarrel with a man you hit him with a wooden club, and he sees who hit him. You do not go and hide yourself and kill him with your thoughts."

While the Mbuti seek to remove themselves as far as possible from sorcery, feeling as though they were contaminated by it, their attitude to other associated supernatural beliefs of the villagers is quite different, being determined by different experience. A villager who has cursed one man may claim that the sickness of that man's distant cousin is a result of his curse, or that the falling of a tree that nearly killed the man's child was equally a result of the curse. These are not allegations that can be proved or disproved, and the Mbuti consequently have a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward sorcery; their disbelief is tinged, at least, by a reluctant suspicion.

However, the villagers also believe that there exist various malevolent spirits, sometimes spirits of sorcerers, and that these spirits have to be avoided, for there is no sure way of placating or propitiating them. Their abode is the forest, which to the villagers is the abode of all evil. Their powers are phenomenal and almost insuperable, avoidance being the only sure safeguard, ritual propitiation being enough to prevent the spirits from entering the village. Thus the forest is a place to be avoided on account of the spirits.

The Mbuti see two things very clearly. One is that such spirits simply do not exist in their forest, and the other is that this particular village belief deserves to be maintained for as long as it is effective in keeping villagers out of the forest. Consequently the Mbuti, who are great storytellers at all times, delight in stories—among themselves and in front of villagers—that enumerate the powers and horrors of such evil forest spirits. Sometimes the stories are of village origin, embellished by Mbuti imagination; sometimes they are pure

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

Mbuti creations. But however much they enlarge upon the power and horror of the evil spirits, they always show that the Mbuti are not without power themselves, and the spirits are every now and again defeated and killed by Mbuti trickery. This confirms the village belief that the Mbuti are in fact in league with the spirits; just the fact that they coexist in the same forest is cited by many villagers as evidence of their affinity.

I cite two legends here (the KiBira versions of the same legends told by the same Mbuti are given in Appendix I[1], both of which show Mbuti ambivalence at its height. The first describes an Mbuti band in a village context (in a plantation) and pointedly refers to a myth that the Mbuti had bananas before the villagers. This is not generally believed to be true, but it is a way of expressing the undoubted prior occupation and ownership of the forest by the Mbuti. In this legend the Mbuti are threatened by a quasi-real enemy, the elephant. Elephants are indeed destructive to plantations and sometimes to Mbuti camps, but here, as seen at the end, the elephant is also a symbol for the villager (who is also destructive in his act of cutting down the forest). To rid themselves of the elephantine menace the Mbuti invent a story about evil spirits, making use of the knowledge that the elephant is basically stupid. When describing the elephant's fear of the spirits, the narrator comments, "Their fear was empty" (*"bachei ba bo"*), "for elephants are like villagers" (*"bambongu bua sopilabatu"*). The legend significantly ends with the promise that the narrator and his family will live happily forever after, but for "happily" the word *kobia* (more often, *ekimi*) is used. It means "quietly."

LEGEND OF THE MBUTI PLANTATION

In olden times we Mbuti had bananas before the people of the village. The people of the village stole bananas from us. We shared together, we Mbuti taking the leaves and the villagers taking the roots. They tricked us this way.

Our plantations of old were good, but the elephants used to bother us a lot. They killed many plantations. The Mbuti said, "What shall we do? The elephants are bothering us so much and are killing our plantations."

An old man, very old indeed, said, "When the elephants come again, we shall talk with them." The youths said, "What will you say?" The old man replied, "You shall see, children."

[1] [see page 301 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

"There is no more, Grandmother." "Yes there is, give it, my bad child." I was very afraid. I threw it all down and said, "That is all, Grandmother, take it and go. There is no more. Take it and return to your place. I shall stay here."

"Thank you, my child, I shall return. Stay well."

"Go well, Grandmother."

I sat with eyes [i.e., watchfully] and waited for daylight. When daylight came I climbed down. I looked for the footprints of my grandmother. There were no footprints. "Ah!" I said. "It was truly an evil spirit. I did well to throw down all my honey, or it would have killed me completely."

That is why I returned empty-handed.

If in telling the stories the Mbuti do so to such good effect that they half convince themselves, they more than convince the villagers. The advantages of the situation to the Mbuti are as obvious as they are considerable. But at the same time it has to be pointed out that the forest itself *is* hostile to the villagers, and they have very real reason to dislike and fear it. It not only makes their life as cultivators hard and uncertain but it makes communication through the forest highly dangerous, to the extent that, until the road along which the villages are now eagerly clustered was built across the middle of the forest, the villages were very self-contained units with little intercommunication. Even now villagers will walk twice as far or more by road to reach another village, rather than take a simple shortcut across the forest. Unversed as they are in forest lore, its dangers are real to the villagers and there are frequent instances of villagers disappearing without trace even while on a relatively short trip. They are promptly added to the legion of forest spirits by their relatives, who have an even greater fear of the forest from then on.

The Mbuti, however, know the forest and its ways, and the dangers it has to offer are exceptionally few and far between. There is certainly nothing in the course of natural events in the forest to suggest to hunters and gatherers any trace of hostility. There is a great abundance of material goods, and of health and security, all of which suggest benevolence. This is taken up in the final section on the forest world, dealing with the religious life of the Mbuti.

One of the best examples of the kind of use to which the Mbuti put village beliefs that do not tally with their own is seen in the following legend (quoted in *The Forest People*, Chapter 7). It makes

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use of the village fear and respect for forest spirits, but it also makes use of the village love for asserting their superiority and their paternalism. It even makes use of the village concept of kinship obligations, and the respect and obedience owed to a grandmother.

The occasion on which the legend was told was the return of Cephu to the camp, after a short absence in the village, laden down with village foods. It was known that he had gone empty-handed, and it was equally known that he was not on good enough terms with any of the villagers to get such a handout for nothing, that he was too lazy to have worked for reward and too wary of pursuit to steal. However, theft seemed the only answer, so he was asked from whom he had stolen the food. Always a great dramatist, Cephu told the following story in answer, and it quickly became a favorite.

"I am only a poor Mbuti; the forest is my father and my mother. But my village master asked me for meat, so I hunted and I hunted and I hunted. I caught *sondu* and *lendu* and *mbolokо* and *sindula*, and I cut them all up and dried them carefully. When they were nice and dry I wrapped the meat in fresh *mongongo* leaves and put it all in my basket and set off for the village."

This much everyone knew to be completely false, but the implied ridicule of the villagers who would believe it was not lost.

"But on the way I saw a bad spirit coming toward me. I tried to escape but he caught up with me and demanded the meat. I said, 'No, this is for my master. I cannot give it to you. You may take all my own food, but not this meat—that is for my beloved master.' But the spirit was not to be put off, and I had to fight with him. Finally I managed to escape because I am strong, and a great hunter, and I ran on toward the village as fast as I could. Spirits are very bad things to fight. They would kill any villager; only we Mbuti can deal with them. But then I saw the spirit again, and this time he was more clever than I, and he changed into my grandmother.

"'A'i, Cephu, where are you going with all that meat?' she asked me.

"Now, my grandmother died many years ago and I had to be polite to her. So I told her I was taking it to my beloved master. But she got angry and demanded it, asking if I would refuse it to her, an Mbuti, my own grandmother, and bring it to a villager. I pleaded with her and begged her, telling her how good my master always was to me and how hungry he was for meat. But she snatched the basket from me,

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and because she was my grandmother I could not strike her or stop her, and she ran off down the trail.

"As she was running she changed into a spirit again so that she could run faster, and as soon as my grandmother was a spirit once more I could fight, so I fought and fought, and the spirit nearly killed me, and he went off in the manner of spirits and left me with nothing, not even my basket.

"When I came to the village I was crying because I had nothing to offer my master, and when my master asked me what was wrong I told him this story. He was terribly sorry because he knew what dreadful lives we Mbuti lead, surrounded by all these bad spirits. He said if it was not for the spirits he would come into the forest and hunt himself, but everyone knows how dangerous the spirits are to villagers. Then I asked him if I could have some rice, as I had lost all my own food as well as his. He said, 'Of course, my poor Mbuti. You have tried to help your master, and you can't help it if you are just an Mbuti and have to live among all those dreadful spirits.'

"So he gave me the rice and plantains and I came away happy. How kind the villagers are to their 'poor Mbuti'!"

Such stories are legion, being told by the Mbuti almost every time they are questioned by the villagers as to why they have brought no meat. They are equally, if not even more frequently, told, however, in the forest hunting camps, and are part of the constant effort of the Mbuti to affirm at all times the distinction between the two worlds, the forest and the village. Magic, witchcraft, sorcery and the belief in forest spirits are all turned to the same effect, among others, and combine to keep the worlds apart not only in theory but also in practice.

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THE GOOD DEATH OF BALEKIMITO

The leader of this group—although with Pygmies it is always unwise to talk of single "leaders"—was a wily but rather naïve Pygmy by the name of Cephu. Most Pygmies use their real names among themselves, but they all have additional names, in KiNgwana, by which they are known to the Negroes. Cephu always used his KiNgwana name, pronounced just slightly differently from the Negro equivalent, Sefu. No matter what language they are speaking, the Pygmies always retain their own peculiar intonation, which renders the language almost incomprehensible to non-Pygmies.

Cephu's family was large, but not large enough, even with all his in-laws, to form a hunting group of his own. To do this you have to have at the very least six or seven individual families, each with its own hunting net; only in this way can you have an efficient net-hunt, with the women and children driving the animals into the long circle of nets, joined end to end. Cephu's group was usually not more than four families, and so he tacked himself onto Njobo and Ekianga. Sometimes this worked out well enough, as Pygmies are great people for visiting their relatives, and one or the other group might be depleted by absences. But at other times they would have a number of families visiting them, and then the addition of Cephu and all his relatives made the whole group far too large and unwieldy. But as he had taken the precaution of exchanging sisters, he could not be refused, and so he would make his own little camp close by connected by a narrow trail. He would follow the others whenever they went hunting and was invariably blamed when the hunt was not a success. At night he and his family kept to themselves, seldom venturing into the main camp. They sat around their own fire, offended, aloof, and rather unhappy, but with hides as tough as that of a forest buffalo and impervious to the most obvious hints and thinly veiled insults. But Cephu was the best storyteller in the forest.

Kenge's position in the group was an undefined and rather happy one. His father had married a sister of Njobo and joined his wife's

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Opposite: A Pygmy woman (right) helps a villager pound locally grown rice.

Old Moke (in a sloth-skin hut) listens as Cephu tells a legend.

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go between the camp and the hunt, if they are not too far apart, bringing news to and fro.

As soon as the hunters return they deposit the meat on the ground, and the camp gathers to make sure the division is fair. Nobody acknowledges that it is, but in the end everyone is satisfied. Cooking operations start at once and within an hour everyone is eating. If the hunt has been a good one, and the day is still young, the most energetic men and women dance immediately afterward, followed by the children. In the course of such a dance they imitate, with suitable exaggeration, the events of the day. If the hunt has not been so good, or a man is tired and does not feel like dancing, he will sit down and gather his family around him and tell them something that has happened to him on the hunt, something wonderful and exciting, but which naturally happened while nobody else was looking.

Since Pygmies are blessed with a lively imagination, these stories grow until it is difficult to tell the difference between what is meant to be a straight, factual account and a traditional legend. And there is always the element of the two-way process in which fact becomes legend, and legend becomes accepted, through constant repetition, as fact.

The dream world of the Pygmies is a very real one, full of hidden meaning and significance. There is one story that Cephu is still fond of telling, and he still tells it in almost exactly the same way as he did six years earlier when I first heard it.

He had been into the village for a short visit, and we all knew he had gone empty-handed. Yet when he returned a few days later he brought a sizable load of plantains and rice with him. Everyone asked him who he had stolen it from. Cephu, with a great smile spreading across his face, sat down and waited for his audience to settle down. With his wife and his children close behind him, and his friends all around, Cephu sat simply on the ground in his most charming and bewitching way, old rascal that he was, even then. He looked up

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at the trees and opened his arms and raised his expressive hands upward. He began telling the story in his beautiful rich voice, the seriousness of what he was saying belied only by the smile that lurked in the depths of his shining brown eyes.

"I am only a poor BaMbuti; the forest is my father and my mother. But my Negro master had asked me to bring him some meat." So Cephu started, self-deprecating, using the term for his patron in the sense in which only the Negroes use it, as indicating ownership. The Pygmies accept this assumption of superiority outwardly, because it pays—as the story went on to show.

"My master asked me for meat, so I hunted and I hunted and I hunted, and I caught sondu and lendu and mboloko and sindula, and I cut them all up and dried them carefully. When they were nice and dry I wrapped the meat in fresh mongongo leaves and put it all in my basket and set off for the village. But on the way I saw a bad spirit coming toward me. I tried to escape but he caught up with me and demanded the meat. I said, 'No, this is for my master. I cannot give it to you. You may take all my own food, but not this meat—that is for my beloved master.' But the spirit was not to be put off, and I had to fight with him. Finally I managed to escape, because I am strong and a great hunter, and I ran on toward the village as fast as I could. Spirits are very bad things to fight. They would kill any villager; only we Pygmies can deal with them. But then I saw the spirit again and this time he was more clever than I, and he changed into my grandmother. 'A'i, Cephu! Where are you going with all that meat?' she asked me. Now my grandmother died many years ago and I had to be polite to her. So I told her I was taking it to my beloved master. But she got angry and demanded it, asking if I would refuse it to her, a Pygmy, my own grandmother, and bring it to a villager? I pleaded with her and begged her, telling her how good my master always was to me, and how hungry he was for meat. But she snatched the basket from me, and because she was my

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"As she was running she changed into a spirit again so that she could run faster, and as soon as my grandmother was a spirit once more I could fight, so I fought and fought, and the spirit nearly killed me, and he went off in the manner of spirits and left me with nothing, not even my basket.

"When I came to the village I was crying because I had nothing to offer my master, and when my master asked me what was wrong I told him this story. He was terribly sorry because he knows what dreadful lives we BaMbuti lead, surrounded by all these bad spirits. [186] He said if it was not for the spirits he would come into the forest and hunt himself, but everyone knows how dangerous the spirits are to villagers. Then I asked him if I could have some rice as I had lost all my own food as well as his. He said, 'Of course, my poor Pygmy, you have tried to help your master, and you can't help it if you are just a Pygmy and have to live among all those dreadful spirits.'

"So he gave me rice and plantains and I came away happy. How kind the villagers are to their poor Pygmies!"

[186] Every time Cephu tells this story it brings knowing smiles to the faces of all who listen, because every "poor Pygmy" has some trick such as Cephu's, by which he twists his "master" around his little finger and at the same time heightens the fear of the villagers for the forest by constantly repeating stories of imaginary spirits and dread dangers.

538 199 This story, as often happened, set off another. Old Asofalinda, Ekianga's sister, was not to be outdone. She described how she had cut down a fine stalk of plantains outside the village but was surprised in the act by the owner. She just had time to push the plantains into a hole in the ground at the foot of the tree. The villager asked what she was doing there, and what she was putting in the [176] hole. "Oh, master," she replied, "there was a dreadful dangerous

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spirit-animal and he was going to attack you so I drove him into the hole and I dare not leave it or he will come out and kill you! Run and get your spear and save me, your poor Pygmy!" The villager was scared out of his wits and ran away. Asofalinda promptly hid the plantains elsewhere and quickly returned to the hole.

At this point in the story, Masamba, Njobo's wife, came to help act out the rest. Asofalinda crouched at the foot of a tree, pretending that she was covering a hole in the ground, and Masamba, acting the part of the villager, crept onto the scene, carrying a spear and looking very frightened. As they acted the scene, the villager came up behind Asofalinda and asked timidly if the spirit-animal was still there. "Yes," said Asofalinda, over her shoulder. "But I have used my magic and sung it to sleep so that you will be able to kill it. But you must be very quiet and very careful. You are the only one who could do it, you are so big and strong and clever, not like we poor Pygmies."

Saying this, she slowly uncovered the hole and whispered to the villager to stoop down and peer in. Masamba then cautiously bent over and peered into the imaginary hole. "No," said Asofalinda, "you will have to look deeper. It is a big hole and the spirit-animal is right at the back. But you must be very quiet or it will wake up and kill you first." So Masamba stooped lower and Asofalinda finished the scene with no further commentary. It was hardly necessary. She crept behind Masamba and kicked her heartily in the backside, and ran off laughing and clapping her hands with mirth. Even Masamba, who suffered the brunt of the joke, enjoyed it so much that the two of them re-enacted it four times that one afternoon.

In ways like this, even on a rainy day when there is no hunting or gathering to be done, a camp can be made lively and entertaining. But generally rain brings depression. People sit in their huts and peer out miserably. On the whole, however, the tenor of life is even, wet